

PRESS RELEASE

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DESIGN INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE KICKS OFF STATE'S CREATIVE ECONOMY MONTH

On Tuesday, June 10, 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Business Development will hold a Design Industry Roundtable with leaders of twenty greater Boston design firms. **Undersecretary Greg Bialecki of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development** will lead an industry development discussion with representatives of greater Boston design companies including Continuum, Kennedy Violich Architecture, Office dA, Schwilliamz Creative Consultancy, Korn Design, MKS Design, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, ground inc., Boston Fashion Week, and WGBH Interactive.

The roundtable is organized by **Designing an Industry/Designing the Future (DIDF)**, an initiative of **Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt.edu)**, and hosted by **Continuum (dcontinuum.com)**, an international design and innovation consultancy based in West Newton.

According to preliminary DIDF research, Massachusetts is home to 2,700 design firms which, together with sole proprietorships, provided more than 32,000 jobs in 2005. Design disciplines include advertising, architecture, graphic design, landscape architecture, interior design, industrial design, and other specialized design fields.

According to **Dan Buchner, Vice President of Innovation and Design at Continuum**, the economic impact of the Massachusetts design industry reaches far beyond its own employment numbers because of the leverage that design has on other leading state industries. He says, "Most Americans would be surprised to know that many of the things they have in their homes were probably designed by people here in Boston. For example, our firm designed the Pampers line of diapers, the Swiffer cleaning system and the Reebok pump. Other Boston companies designed the iRobot Roomba and

Scooba, the Brita water pitcher, Oxo kitchenwares, even the Walkabout dog leash. These are all Boston products.”

The Massachusetts design economy is also supported by the constant influx of skilled designers emerging from region’s educational institutions. **Kay Sloan, President of Massachusetts College of Art and Design**, says, “MassArt design graduates go on to work for companies such as Reebok, Harmonix, and iRobot, designing innovative products that that are directly tied to these companies’ bottom lines. It is hard to imagine a healthy state economy without the contribution of design know-how.”

It is only recently that the state has begun to pay attention to design as a source of economic growth and competitiveness. In 2007, the Massachusetts Cultural Council provided seed funding to Designing an industry/Designing the Future, an industry organization initiative spearheaded by MassArt. Modeled on the Life Sciences Collaborative, DIDF is led by a Design Advisory Committee that sponsors international design symposia, industry research, and programs aimed at growing the Massachusetts design industry.

DIDF Director Beate Becker says, “Our goal is to get the design community to act like the industry that it is. We are bringing together designers with educators, companies, and policy makers to create the programs and structures needed to grow the design sector. The fact that the Massachusetts Department of Business Development wants to hear from designers demonstrates that the Patrick administration understands the creative economy is not just about quality of life but about creating jobs and companies.”

The Design Industry Roundtable is the first in a series of industry roundtables that the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development is hosting in June as part of its effort to understand growth opportunities in the commonwealth’s creative economy. The meetings coincide with the recent appointment of Jason Schupbach as the creative economy director in the Department of Business Development. DBD is one of three undersecretariats under the purview of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. DBD and its agencies are responsible for working with businesses and citizens to strengthen the economy in Massachusetts through job creation.